

**2020 Ruby Lecture  
Epsilon Sigma Phi 2020 National Conference  
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**The Face of Extension  
Wendy Wintersteen  
President, Iowa State University  
Recipient of the 2020 National Ruby Award**

Thank you to Epsilon Sigma Phi. Thank you my colleagues and friends in Iowa State University Extension and Outreach for nominating me.

And a special thank you to the leaders of Iowa State's Alpha Mu Chapter of Epsilon Sigma Phi, chaired by Barbara Dunn-Swanson. In the news release on the Ruby Award, Barbara was quoted saying "President Wintersteen has maintained her extension soul." I love that quote!

That's why the Ruby Award is an exceptional and meaningful recognition for me. I am truly honored.

I am happy to receive the Ruby Award for many professional reasons — but for a personal one, too. My Grandma Wintersteen was named Ruby. So that makes this honor even more special to me. Grandma Ruby had a sister named Pearl. Growing up, my grandma and great-aunt were precious jewels to me who lived up to their names.

I wish I could be with you in person, and see all of you. But in these pandemic days we're living in, it's not easy to get together. Instead, I'm standing in the Christian Petersen Art Museum in Morrill Hall on the campus of Iowa State University.

Our Morrill Hall is a beautiful brick building built in 1891. Fifteen years ago, it was beautifully restored, thanks to the grassroots efforts of more than 3,300 private donors. The building was rededicated in 2007, just in time for Iowa State's sesquicentennial celebration.

One reason I wanted to be here in Morrill Hall is because it is a powerful testament to the strength of our land-grant university roots. For us here at Iowa State University, this building reminds us that the state of Iowa was the first to accept the provisions of the Morrill Act — and that more than 160 years later, we continue to embrace the land-grant ideals of access, practical education, shared knowledge. We continue to prove the relevance of our work in extension, research, education and access.

Throughout my career, Extension always has given me more than I could give in return. Extension has always taught me what it means to be part of a caring community committed to making a difference in people's lives. I've learned so much throughout my career from Extension — especially on how to listen to others and how to learn from their experiences.

From extension I learned the importance of trust — of establishing those bonds of trust that make learning possible. I learned that quickly as a young, fresh-faced extension associate in Iowa, working with farmers in their fields.

As you all know, it is a two-way road. I learned so much from the farmers and their families — what they knew about their land, the growing seasons they had experienced, their desire to help a new, young extension associate and their thirst for learning more and doing better.

I have a black-and-white photo of a group of farmers and me at a field day in Muscatine County in 1979. At the end of the event, the county extension director told me I did a good job. Then he added that if he had been confident in my performance, he would have advertised the field day more broadly — but he just wasn't sure.

So, sometimes it wasn't easy forging that trust. I had to believe in myself, and the grounding in extension made that possible. It's still true today.

When you believe in yourself, you have the courage to move forward and you can't be afraid. As a young extension associate, once I could help my audience see the value in research-based, proven results to make progress, I won their trust and respect — not just for me, but for land-grant science and how we share our knowledge.

For me, trustworthiness is the heart of extension and outreach. We want to be that trusted source of science-based education and information. Part of that is looking into people's faces and reading what we see there.

Trust always comes with a face. Each one of us knows that, firsthand. Even today, when people see our faces on a screen instead of in person. Even today, when sometimes people see only half of our faces — because we're doing the right thing by wearing our face coverings.

The face of Extension is a familiar one to many.

It's the face of extension specialists in family and community issues who are helping rural areas take action against the opioid crisis by reaching the young and old with substance abuse prevention programs.

It's the face of a local mentor and volunteer sparking the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of youthful 4-H club members.

It's the face of the extension field agronomist helping farmers overcome fields that are flooded, parched by drought or — in my early extension career in integrated pest management— infested by insects that threaten harvest.

In my own personal story, the face of Extension to me, as a child, was reflected in the face of my mother. My mother never worked for Extension. But her life was deeply influenced — and enhanced — by her participation in the Extension Homemaker clubs through Kansas State University Extension. My mother also learned much from Extension educational programs based in nutrition and food safety research. As a child, I remember her coming home from those meetings with new information that changed how we ate, how we cleaned our kitchen and how we lived our lives.

In that way, Extension's influence on me came very early, and partly in the face of my mother. I believe my mother, too, had an Extension soul. Mother was so proud when I accepted an offer an Extension position with Iowa State University in 1979 – although I have to tell you she had

always hoped that I would be in the families extension program, not in agricultural extension. I think she knew that I would face challenges being one of the few women working in agricultural extension way back then.

So, another reason I felt our Morrill Hall was an appropriate setting for today is the faces of the portraits you see hanging on the wall behind me. A few years ago, our University Museums, led by Lynette Pohlman, brought about an effort called the “Faces of Iowa State,” a series of portraits of contemporary people who are change agents, partners and contributors to Iowa State. Over 40 portraits were completed: A cross-section of students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends, that celebrate the diverse qualities that define the people of a great university. The portraits were painted by a wonderful Iowa artist named Rose Frantzen — some were painted right here in this building.

When I thought about my theme of the Face of Extension, I thought about highlighting some of these “Faces of Iowa State” that celebrated Extension change agents. I wanted to proudly share with you a little information on each of these five portraits, and let you see their faces.

- **Evan Fritz.** Evan was a 2016 graduate in kinesiology, and was one of our very first participants in Iowa State Extension and Outreach’s Rising Stars internship program. As an intern, Evan helped Iowans understand their local food system and the benefits of locally grown foods. He was an active 4-Her, too, as a young person and throughout college. Evan represents how Extension builds skills in young people in all 99 counties of our state. After graduation, Evan returned to his hometown and was elected to the county extension council, continuing to give back to extension.
- **Mary Giese.** Mary was one of the 900 Iowans elected to serve on county extension councils across the state, and who work to support Extension and Outreach programs and services at the county level. Mary’s personal philosophy will be familiar to many of you: It was to try to live the 4-H motto: “Make the best better.”
- **Shirley Stakey.** Shirley worked 35 years for Extension. She started as a county Extension home economist and then spent many years on campus on the state 4-H staff. She was a well-known face to many Iowa State Fair-goers, as she served 23 years as superintendent of the 4-H exhibits building. She earned many awards for her dedication, but for Shirley, Extension brought purpose, fulfillment and enjoyment to each day because she was living, loving and doing for and with other people.
- **JaneAnn Stout.** JaneAnn served 34 years with Extension, influencing thousands of Iowans through a great diversity of programs involving the visual arts, home economics, nutrition and much more. She was an administrator who provided leadership for our Extension Families programs working to improve how families live, eat, work and thrive. She retired as associate dean for extension in our College of Human Sciences, director of Extension to Families and associate professor of design. JaneAnn and I worked closely together for a time, she in her role and me as the Director of Extension to Agriculture and Natural Resources. If I do say so myself, we were a powerful team for the benefit of Iowans.
- **Paxton Williams.** The final portrait, Paxton Williams, is one of our alums. As a student in our University Honors program, Paxton created a one-man play about George Washington Carver, also an Iowa State alum and faculty member. Paxton has performed

his play across the country and overseas, embodying the character of George Washington Carver and telling the story of Carver's path that led him to Tuskegee University and worldwide fame and recognition — including developing an agricultural extension program for Alabama modeled on Iowa State's.

These five faces are only a small part of a tapestry of knowledgeable faces that defines extension, along with hands and minds prepared to help. My story is part of theirs, and theirs is part of mine, along the Extension journey. I could fill the entire wall behind me, and this entire gallery, with the faces of Extension who've served so well to gain the trust of Iowans. I know you could do the same in your own part of the country. One and all are change agents.

As I mentioned earlier, we live in times where many of the faces of Extension we see are “virtual” or are half-covered in face masks. I'm hopeful we soon will be able to more in person.

But the pandemic has proven once again how Extension pivots to the current situation.

Thanks to the great work of John Lawrence, our Vice President for Extension and Outreach, and his statewide team, Iowa State Extension and Outreach continues to develop and explore new, innovative ways to engage Iowans and bring research-based education to all. We will apply the lessons we learn to better respond to emerging needs to access education in the post-pandemic world.

So, Extension is proving once again the steadfast ability to change with the times. The face of Extension is still present, transferring university expertise to every county in the state, even as it reflects a constant reinvention of delivery methods and modes of expertise to match the changing needs of our people and communities.

I believe, too, the trusted face of Extension must show itself in how we make meaningful contributions to the troubled conversations across the country — where the faces we see are incredibly diverse. Unfortunately, we see these faces often in anguish — nearly every day lately, and the headlines tell you why.

We know that central to our Extension story and our values is access — ensuring all our programs are inclusive and available to persons from every walk of life — and that the principles of diversity and inclusion are fully embedded in our programs and organizations.

The welcoming face of Extension can show itself in playing an important role in modeling awareness and respect for the needs of every person. We have some great examples here in the state of Iowa, led by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach:

- We led a project in four Iowa communities to promote Latino family health, with an emphasis on preventing obesity among Latino youth. The project reached nearly 300 family members. Last fall it was recognized as part of Iowa State's National Extension Diversity Award at the APLU annual meeting.
- We are working with underserved refugee farmers from Africa and Asia to increase their knowledge on food safety, helping them become certified to sell at Iowa farmers markets.

- Each year our nutrition education and healthy food access programs (EFNEP and SNAP-Ed) serve hundreds of low-income Iowans, helping them make healthier choices and increasing access to healthy foods. More than half of the participants identify with a racial and/or ethnic minority — a rate that's been steady for the past five years.
- We partnered with Cedar Rapids, our second-largest city in Iowa, on a program to ensure foreign-born residents have the education and connections necessary to reach their ultimate potential — and to play a key role in growing the city's economy. ISU Extension and Outreach's extensive network of contacts within the immigrant and minority business community helped to ensure broad input into program planning.
- Our Iowa Concern hotline for stress counseling and information services has been especially active and important during the COVID-19 crisis. We have three staff members who speak Spanish fluently, plus access to interpreters who provide support for over 200 languages to overcome communications barriers with non-English speaking Iowans.

I'm sure in your own states you could add many other examples to these stories of inclusion. Because Extension always is helping to take the pulse of our families and communities in ways that inform our research programs. It also can help inform how we think about and approach troubled times — and show our face of Extension as a caring one with trusted resources and education that helps move us forward.

As president of Iowa State University, I get to work with an amazing team of people. I've been blessed with that spirit of team throughout my career at Iowa State — in extension, on the faculty, in administration. I'm very proud of our teamwork because no one accomplishes anything by themselves. My success is their success.

I'd like you to take a moment to reflect on whose faces come to mind when you think of the impactful work of Extension today. Who is the face of Extension for you? Who is the face of Extension in the lives of those you work for to make a difference in homes, farms and communities?

When you do this, I ask you not to forget to look in the mirror. You are looking on the face of Extension, one that believes in yourself and your team, and one who knows where the strong bond of trust may lead us.

Thank you again for the 2020 Ruby Award.